

SUPPORT FOR NORTH AMERICAN
INCLUSION MONTH**HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 2010

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend Representative TOWNS on H.R. 1014 which recognizes and supports the goals and ideals of North American Inclusion Month. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution which demonstrates Congress' support for ensuring that all individuals are included in communities across the Nation. I would also like to commend Yachad and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America for their continued support of disabled Americans.

I recently introduced two bills that support the ideals and goals of North American Inclusion Month, H.R. 4533, the Technology Bill of Rights and H.R. 1408, the Inclusive Home Design Act.

The Technology Bill of Rights would allow the blind and visually impaired equal access to rapidly advancing electronics, which millions of Americans use every day. Because the blind are currently not able to interact with many new technologies, they must overcome barriers of which other Americans may not even be aware.

The visually impaired are not able to use touch screens and visual displays, which have replaced knobs and buttons on many appliances. They face challenges in choosing new stoves, microwaves, fax machines, and cell phones. These technologies have become essential for many Americans, and inaccessibility has challenged the independence of and work opportunities of the blind. Even in good economic times, the blind face enormous barriers in their attempts to join the workforce, because of the inability to use many office technologies that require visual interaction. The recent economic downturn has amplified these hurdles to employment.

H.R. 4533 would ensure blind and visually impaired Americans equal access to these new technologies. The bill would mandate that consumer electronics, home appliances, kiosks, and electronic office technology are designed with nonvisual access components so that they are usable by all people. There are already inexpensive mechanisms that have been created which manufacturers can use to ensure equal access. This includes text-to-speech technology that has unfortunately not seen widespread implementation. This bill would increase the implementation of existing technologies and create new jobs as new technologies are developed to ensure that products are accessible for the visually impaired.

The Inclusive Home Design Act would mandate that all new homes built with the assistance of Federal funds would be accessible for the disabled. This legislation is based on the principle of integrating basic accessibility, establishing "visitability" standards, and allowing elderly Americans to "age in place" rather than being forced to move, be institutionalized, or spend thousands of dollars on home renovations. This is a sustainable, affordable, and inclusive design approach. It would require the new homes to meet four accessibility standards. First, it would require at minimum one

accessible entrance into the home. Second, doorways on the first floor must be large enough to accommodate wheelchairs. Third, at least one bathroom must be wheelchair accessible. Finally, the light switch and thermostats are required to be at a reachable height for those in a wheelchair. I am proud to have the support of Access Living and the Paralyzed Veterans of America in passing this legislation.

I encourage my colleagues to support the resolution recognizing North American Inclusion Month, and I look forward to continuing to work with them to ensure equal access for all.

HONORING THE LIFE OF RICHARD
"DICK" SPOTO, FORMER PRIN-
CIPAL AND HEADMASTER**HON. KATHY CASTOR**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 2010

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and contributions of Richard "Dick" Spoto—and to acknowledge his dedication to the teachers, students and his neighbors in the Tampa Bay Area.

Mr. Spoto was born in Tampa, Florida in 1917. He was the youngest of 13 children born to Guiseppina and Pietro Spoto. He started his 41-year career in education as the assistant football coach at Hillsborough High and then the head coach at Jefferson High until he became the county's first director of health and physical education in 1949. Shortly after, Mr. Spoto returned to school and received his master's degree in administration from the University of Florida in 1952.

Mr. Spoto realized soon after receiving his masters that his true calling resided in the school system. So he returned to become principal of Tampa Bay Boulevard Elementary from 1953–1961, then Sligh Junior High from 1961–1966 and finally Hillsborough High from 1966–1970. After leaving the school district, he went to work as headmaster at Saint Mary's Episcopal Day School before retiring in 1980.

For 41 years, Mr. Spoto was dedicated to enriching the lives of his students and colleagues. His mentor and friend Richard "Norm" Pettigrew, with whom he created the group Athletes from the Past, described him as "a friend to everyone—an inspiration really . . . he would instill good habits and kept you on track."

While Mr. Spoto may be gone his lifelong commitment to athletics and education has been celebrated with many honors, culminating in 2005 with the dedication of Richard C. Spoto High School.

Mr. Spoto is survived by his two daughters, Susan Spoto Shobe, Elizabeth "B.J." Spoto-Russell along with his four grandchildren, Ashley Shobe Gilkison, David C. Shobe Jr., Kathleen Elizabeth Johns, and Allison Elayne Russell and his two great-grandchildren, Richard "Bo" Gilkison and Elizabeth Marie Johns. The Tampa community honors the life of Mr. Spoto for his outstanding contributions as an educator.

His service to the Tampa Bay community has made a lasting mark that will not soon be forgotten.

THE RENEWABLE ENERGY
EXPANSION ACT**HON. EARL BLUMENAUER**

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 2010

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, the impacts of a changing climate are far-reaching, representing a threat not only to our natural ecosystems but to our national security as well. To help avoid the worst effects of carbon pollution, consumers must have a dependable supply of energy that is clean, renewable, and American. The right combination of tax incentives, regulatory changes, and investment in research and development for cleaner energy can expand the renewable energy market, put renewable energy on an equal footing with traditional fossil fuels, and create good domestic jobs in the clean energy industry.

During the economic crisis, renewable energy investors were unable to take advantage of tax credits offered by the federal government to spur renewable energy investment and production. For example, many industry analysts anticipated that in 2009 wind power development would drop by as much as 50% from 2008 levels, with equivalent job losses.

To avoid this outcome, the federal government shifted its tax credit contribution to these projects into cash grants for qualifying projects. This program was extremely successful: in 2009, as a result of these policies, the U.S. wind industry broke all previous records by installing nearly 10,000 megawatts of new generating capacity in 2009. Other renewable energy providers reported similar gains.

This grant program expires on December 31, 2010. The legislation that I am introducing today, the Renewable Energy Expansion Act, will ensure that these benefits are not lost and will ensure that consumers continue to gain better access to sources of clean, renewable energy.

The Renewable Energy Expansion Act allows taxpayers to elect to receive a tax credit that functions as a direct payment for investing in or producing renewable energy. The amount of the payment is tailored to equal the subsidy provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's energy grant program. The legislation provides taxpayers the option to receive this new credit or to use the ARRA-created grant program, depending on which program best matches their needs. The legislation also ensures the smooth continuation of our underlying commitment to clean, renewable energy by carrying forward existing guidance and making technical changes to improve the underlying program. Finally, the legislation extends the credit until January 1, 2013.

The legislation makes several technical improvements to the underlying grant program. First, it eliminates an unintended consequence of the normalization rules that limited the ability of regulated utilities to develop renewable power facilities, even if the project otherwise met the prudency tests required by their public utilities commissions. I look forward to seeing added renewable power capacity in my state as a result.

Second, the legislation also improves the investment climate for renewable projects by streamlining access to these investments by